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A PAPER BY

WILLISTON WALKER, PH.D.,

PROFESSOR IN HARTFORD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

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WHY DID NOT MASSACHUSETTS HAVE A SAYBROOK PLATFORM?

TO the student of the history of New England, whether his interest centers chiefly in the religious or political development of the land, the Saybrook synod is of much importance. In the call and action of that body State and Church came into as intimate relations as have ever existed between them in English-speaking America. At the command of the government of Connecticut, the representatives of the churches met, in 1708, and outlined an ecclesiastical constitution differing in many particulars from the churchly usages of the colony up to that time,—a constitution limiting sharply the freedom of individual congregations, providing bodies for the adjudication of disputes within definite territories, appointing the method of ministerial licensure and settlement, and giving to the established religious system of the colony a fixity in administration markedly contrasting with the prevailing individualism of Massachusetts Congregationalism during the greater part of the eighteenth century. The result of this synod, supported as it was by the State, stamped on Connecticut Congregationalism a peculiar semi-Presbyterian character; and, so obvious was the unlikeness between the organization of the churches of that colony and those of other parts of New England a hundred years ago, that the natural inclination is to look upon the Saybrook system as of local growth. In reality, however, it was the fruit of a movement which made itself strongly felt in Massachusetts, and probably originated in that colony. Why this wide-spread tendency accomplished little in the larger province, while it became dominant in Connecticut, is the object of present inquiry.

The closing year of the seventeenth century saw Boston in a turmoil of religious controversy, though the divergencies between the two parties would not seem to a modern mind very radical. The recent political changes which had

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transformed Massachusetts into a royal province, and even more the passing away of the older generation, had greatly lessened the influence of the ministry on legislation and the conduct of government. The restiveness which had all along been felt at the dominance of the clerical element had gathered strength. In Boston, foreign influences had established Episcopacy by 1686, and though Episcopacy was as yet an exotic on Massachusetts soil, there were an increasing number of persons throughout the churches who desired modification of the prevalent strictness in regard to admissions to full membership and of the almost universal restriction of the choice of ministers to members of churches in full communion. But over against them stood a conservative party embracing the older and more prominent ministers in the colony. Its leader was unquestionably Increase Mather, teacher of the Second Church in Boston, and since 1685, president of Harvard, who though far from universally popular had been for thirty years the leading clerical citizen of New England. With him may be reckoned, since they were one in sympathy, his son, Cotton Mather, from 1685 his colleague in the pastorate of the Boston church. To the same party also belonged such ministers as James Allen of the Boston First Church, John Higginson and Nicholas Noyes, of Salem, and William Hubbard, of Ipswich. To these men the true method of bettering the religious state of New England seemed to lie in such an enforcement of discipline within the local church and exercise of watch over the churches by councils representative of a colony or district as would prevent the incoming of looser fashions and preserve uniformity of government and procedure. All this implied an increase in ministerial and synodical authority—an increase all the more difficult to obtain at a time when the political tide in Massachusetts was running in the other direction.

The desires of this conservative party found chief expression in the two classes of meetings in which the ministers of that day gathered for conference, the Ministers' Convention and the District Associations. Though the general nature of each of these meetings is clear, their origin is somewhat obscure. There is every reason to believe that the Minis-

ters' Convention can trace its source, in germ if not in full organization, to the beginning of the Massachusetts colony; while the local Associations, at least as continuously existing bodies, are of much later date.[1] It had been the custom from the earliest days of New England for the ministers of the whole colony to gather at the meetings of the General Court, especially at the Court of Election in May.[2] Their advice was frequently taken by that body while Massachusetts was ruled by the first charter, and though by the close of the seventeenth century the ministry was no longer the political factor that it had been, these meetings were continued, and were occasions of considerable ceremony. Cotton Mather, in his *Magnalia*, speaks of the Convention as existing "in each colony;"[3] and in the *Ratio Disciplinæ* enters into a lengthy description of its organization, sermon, discussions and dinner.[4] This Ministerial Convention was no judicial body; but it debated questions of general interest, and its advice was much respected.[5] It might be made the instrument of a more centralized church government; or, if not itself the head of a more consolidated ecclesiastical system, might recommend such a union to the churches.

Beside this Ministerial Convention, there were, at the opening of the eighteenth century, five district Associations

[1] Valuable, though by no means exhaustive, articles on the history of these bodies are the *Hist. Sketch of the Convention of Cong. Ministers in Mass.*, Cambridge, 1821; Dr. A. H. Quint, *Cong. Quarterly*, ii, 203–212, v, 293–304; S. J. Spalding, *Ibid.*, vi, 161–175; also *Cont. Eccles. Hist. Essex Co., Mass.*, pp. 8–56.

[2] Hints of such meetings are scattered through Winthrop's *Journal*, e. g. (ed. 1853), i, 157, 363, ii, 3, 76. The statement of Lechford is direct, Trumbull's ed., p. 62. Whether the ministers met at first as an organized body is perhaps doubtful. The *Hist. Sketch* above cited, p. 5, says that the "presumptive evidence" is "that there was no organized Convention before the year 1680."

[3] *Magnalia*, ed. 1853–55, ii, 271.

[4] Pp. 176, 177.

[5] "*Then* the *Ministers* chusing a *Moderator*, do propose Matters of public Importance, refering to the Interest of Religion in the Churches," *Ibid.*, p. 176. Such were e. g., in 1697, when the body protested against "tendencies which there are amongst us towards Deviations from the good Order wherein our Churches have . . . been happily established;" or in 1698, when they decided that "the Church Covenant as Commonly practised in the Churches" is scriptural. I. Mather, *Order of the Gospel*, pp. 8, 9, 39.

in Massachusetts,[1] all tracing their immediate origin to the Association meeting at Cambridge which had been founded in October, 1690, and included most of the ministers in the vicinity of Boston. There had been ministerial meetings, similar to the later Associations, in the early days of the colony ;[2] but for reasons not now easy to discover, unless it be for fear of Presbyterian tendencies, these early meetings were abandoned. Rev. Thomas Shepard, of Charlestown, in his election sermon of 1672, declared that he recalled such gatherings in his childhood, and that there were "hundreds yet living" who could "remember the ministers' meetings in the several towns by course, at Cambridge, Boston, Charlestown, Roxbury, &c."[3] But the permanent reëstablishment of Associations came about through English example. On September 7, 1655, such a body had been formed at Bodmin, in Cornwall. Its meetings were not probably of long continuance; by the summer of 1659, the journal had closed. But the record book[4] passed into the possession of one of the members, Rev. Charles Morton; and Morton came to New England in 1686, and became the pastor at Charlestown. A man of much influence in the colony, it is probable that it was his endeavors which resulted in the organization of the first permanent district Association in Massachusetts, on October 13, 1690. This body embraced most of the ministers in the vicinity of Boston, and was often called by that name,[5] though its meetings, at least during the early part of

[1] This is shown by the signatures to the *Proposals* of 1705, given in the *Panoplist*, x, 323. It illustrates the obscurity of the subject that the articles written by Dr. Quint thirty years ago knew nothing of the existence of two of the five and he was unable to trace the third to a period earlier than nearly twenty years subsequent to 1705.

[2] Winthrop, i, 139; Lechford, p. 37, a passage which Dr. Trumbull has illustrated with notes of great value.

[3] *Eye Salve, or a Watchword from our Lord Jesus Christ unto his Churches*, p. 29, quoted by Dr. Quint, *Cong. Quarterly*, ii, 204. See also Wise, *Churches Quarrel Espoused*, ed. 1715, p. 79.

[4] This book, containing a list of the members and rules of the Bodmin Association, and also of the Cambridge, Mass., Association, from 1690 to 1704, is in the possession of the Mass. Hist. Society. See Dr. Quint as cited, pp. 204–207.

[5] So called in the signatures to the *Proposals* of 1705.

its history, were "at the College in Cambridge, on a Monday at nine or ten of the clock in the morning, once in six weeks, or oftener." [1] Its pledge of union and its rules were based on those of the Bodmin body. The example thus set was followed by the organization of similar bodies, in Essex County, about Weymouth, about Sherborne, and in Bristol County, during the last decade of the seventeenth and first three or four years of the eighteenth century.[2] Their purpose was deliberative as well as social, and the resolutions of the Cambridge-Boston body at least, embraced a wide range of doctrine and practice,[3] and showed a decided tendency to assert the judicial character of ecclesiastical councils.[4]

But there were not wanting those, especially among the younger ministry, and even in the Cambridge-Boston Association itself, who looked toward a modification of Congregational strictness rather than a return to the early ideals. The leaders of this party were four youngerly men of position, two of them being John Leverett and William Brattle, graduates of Harvard in 1680, who had become tutors in the college in 1685, the year which saw the beginning of Increase Mather's presidency, and who had taken practical charge of the college during Mather's long absence in England as agent for the colony. Leverett was destined to be Mather's second successor as the head of the college, while Brattle in 1696, became pastor of the Cambridge church. With them were associated Thomas Brattle, brother of the Cambridge pastor, and from 1693 to 1713, treasurer of Harvard, and Ebenezer Pemberton, who from 1700 to 1717, was colleague pastor of

[1] Its rules are given in full in the *Magnalia*, ed. 1853–55, ii, 271, 272.

[2] *Proposals* of 1705. Indications of the existence of an association in Essex Co., (called Salem in the Proposals) are found in the records of the Cambridge body as early as November 1691, and these records by 1692, imply the existence of at least three bodies,—but which is the third is hard to say. When the next association further north than Salem, that at Bradford, was formed in 1719, its formula of union was the same as that of Bodmin and Cambridge, and as it in all probability was an offshoot from Salem it indicates a common origin for all.

[3] Cotton Mather gives a long series of the conclusions of this body in full, *Magnalia*, ii, 239–269.

[4] E. g., *Ibid.*, p. 248.

the Old South Church, in Boston. The work of these innovators was in two main directions—the founding of a new church (Brattle Church), sympathetic with their beliefs, in Boston; and the exclusion of the Mathers from the control of Harvard. Both tasks they accomplished, but at the cost of much bitter personal quarrel.

Occupying a position between the Mathers and the innovators, and not without some sympathy for the latter, was Samuel Willard, a man considerably older than either of the four just enumerated, the teacher of the Old South Church in Boston, and from the practical deposition of Increase Mather in 1701, in fact, though not in title, president of Harvard.

Into the story of the founding of Brattle Church and the expulsion of the Mathers from dominance at Harvard, there is no need to enter in detail.[1] The changes desired by the innovators involved principally the abandonment of public relations of religious experience as a condition of admission to full communion; and the extension of a share in a minister's selection to all baptized adults who contributed to his support.[2] With these alterations they desired also to combine what would now be called an "enrichment" of the service, in the form of regular public reading of the scriptures without explanatory comment; and an extension of church privileges so that any children presented by any professing Christian sponsor, whether parent or not, should receive baptism. These positions the innovators apparently did not hold at first in an aggressively controversial manner. But they were known, and in 1697 the Mathers took rather

[1] The story of Brattle Church is treated at length by Lothrop, *Hist. of the Church in Brattle street*, Boston, 1851; Quincy, *Hist. of Harvard University*, i, 127–144, 486, 502; Robbins, *Hist. Second Church in Boston*, pp, 40–44; Palfrey, *Hist. N. E.*, iv, 189–191; *Memorial Hist. of Boston*, ii, 204–211; Sibley, *Graduates of Harvard*, biog. of the Brattles and Leverett; Brooks Adams, *Emancipation of Mass.*, pp. 237–254; H. A. Hill, *Hist. Old South Church*, i, 308–313. The relations of the Mathers to Harvard are unsympathetically told by Quincy, *Ibid.*, i, 57–126. This is still the fullest treatment of the subject. See also Robbins, *Ibid.*, pp. 44–64; Brooks Adams, *Ibid.*, pp. 261–285; H. A. Hill, *Ibid.*, i, 319–323; Wendell, *Cotton Mather, passim.*

[2] The latter had already been done at Salem and Dedham. See Robbins, *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 42.

aggravating occasion to attack the two principal changes desired by the Brattles and their friends.[1] This attack led to decided action. In January, 1698, Thomas Brattle transferred to a body of associates, of which he was the leader, the site in Boston on which a new meeting-house was at once erected; and in May, 1699, the associates sent a call, reinforced by cordial letters from William Brattle, Leverett and Pemberton,[2] to Benjamin Colman, a Harvard graduate of 1692, then in England, asking him to become their pastor, and requesting him to procure ordination at more sympathetic hands than he would find in Boston. On November 1, 1699, Colman was in Boston, a minister according to Presbyterian ideas, but no clergyman in the view of strict Congregationalists; on November 17, the associates put forth a *Manifesto*[3] asserting the principles of the innovators; and this publication was followed, on December 12, by the organization of a church of fourteen members, without aid of council or countenance from other churches.

All this was thoroughly at variance with the older New England theory and practice, to the Mathers it seemed the dawning of a "day of temptation begun upon the town and land."[4] But, in spite of vigorous pamphlets from the conservatives,[5] and a vote of the Ministerial Convention in May, 1700, designed to prevent a second Brattle Church and

[1] When Cotton Mather published his *Life of Jonathan Mitchel*, in 1697, (also in the *Magnalia*, ed. 1853–55, ii, 66–113), Increase Mather took occasion in a prefatory letter, addressed "To the Church at Cambridge . . . and to the Students of the Colledge there," to set forth Mitchel's view of the necessity of relations, and made pointed exhortations to the church, tutors and students, in a way doubtless exasperating to the innovators. Three months later in the same year, when the Charlestown church had chosen a minister in the way desired by the Brattles and their friends, the Mathers' church sent a letter of admonition to its sister in Charlestown "for betraying the liberties of the churches, in their late putting into the hands of the whole inhabitants the choice of a minister." Robbins, p. 42.

[2] The call and extracts from the letters are in Lothrop, *Hist. of the Church in Brattle Street*, pp. 45–48.

[3] In full, *Ibid.*, 20–26.

[4] C. Mather's Journal, Quincy, *Hist. Harvard*, i, 486.

[5] The most important is Increase Mather's *Order of the Gospel*, Boston, 1700.

strengthen the government of the churches,[1] the new church won recognition in Boston, the Mathers were defeated; and before the close of the next year, 1701, Increase Mather, in spite of his great services to the colony and the support of the representatives of the towns in the lower House of the General Court, was practically dismissed from the presidency of Harvard,[2] by the combined effect of the Brattle Church quarrel and long standing political grudges, dating back to his return with the new charter from England. His virtual successor was Willard, and Harvard came under the control of the innovators.

Here then was a state of affairs serious enough to incline the supporters of the old order, who were the majority in the colony, to strengthen the machinery for enforcing ecclesiastical authority, the more so that other towns than Boston were in turmoil.[3] It was to remedy these supposed evils that the *Proposals* of 1705 were prepared, which became the model for the Saybrook action in Connecticut. But the remarkable thing about the movement which led to them is that, such is the curious effect of the lapse of a little time in modifying ecclesiastical struggles, we find some men prominent among the Brattle Church innovators who now support associational attempts which had for their design the prevention of similar novelties in the future.

The steps which led to this consociational movement are obscure owing to the loss of records, but as far as the writer

[1] The vote, which is important as showing the desire of the Convention for a closer union of the churches, is given by Increase Mather, *Disquisition Concerning Ecclesiastical Councils*, Boston, 1716, p. 38, "To prevent the great mischief to the Evangelical Interests, that may arise from the unadvised proceedings of People to gather Churches in the Neighbourhood, it is provided, that the Result of the Synod, in 1662, relating to the Consociation of Churches may be Republished, with an Address to the Churches, Intimating our desires (and so far as we are Concerned our purposes) to see that Advice carefully attended, and the irregular Proceedings of any People hereafter contrary to that Advice, not Encouraged."

[2] The ostensible ground of complaint was Mather's non-residence, but its inadequacy is shown by the fact that the Court took Willard on the same terms, keeping up a show of consistency by leaving his title that of vice-president.

[3] Increase Mather recorded in his diary in March, 1697, "There are miserable confusions and divisions in Watertown, Cambridge, Charlestown, and at the South Church in Boston," Quincy, i, 477.

can ascertain the initiation was in the Ministers' Convention on June 1, 1704. That body issued a circular letter to the churches, urging greater faithfulness in pastoral duty, and proposing:[1]

"That the *Associations* of the Ministers in the several Parts of [the] Country may be strengthened; And the several *Associations* may by *Letter* hold more free Communications with one another."

The document thus urging the strengthening of Ministerial Associations was signed by all the Boston ministers, except Increase Mather; the first three names being those of Samuel Willard, Ebenezer Pemberton and Benjamin Colman. Cotton Mather's signature was the sixth, and with them were twenty-two others, embracing a large proportion of the ministers of eastern Massachusetts from Andover on the north to Barnstable and Bristol (then claimed by Massachusetts) on the south, and Sudbury and Mendon on the west. As Leverett and Thomas Brattle were not pastors, the only missing name of the innovators mentioned which could have been appended is that of William Brattle.

This earnest and practical vote was communicated to the ministry of the colony and reinforced by a letter sent out by the Cambridge-Boston Association, over the signature of its moderator Samuel Willard, on Nov. 6, 1704. The letter urged:[2]

"That the Pastours of our Churches may more comfortably enjoy y^e assistance of one another, w^c doubtless y^y all find more than a little needfull for y^m under y^e difficulty w^c in their ministry y^y often meet withall, you are very sensible how usefull their well-formed association may be unto y^m. * * * * * It is to be hoped, y^t where such associations have been already formed, y^y will be lively maintained, & preserved, & faithfully carried on. And where y^y are not yet formed, y^e Lord will stir up his servants to consider w^t to do, y^t y^y may not incur y^e inconveniences of him y^t is alone. But there is one thing more, w^c has been great desired, & never yet so fully attained. It is, That y^e severall associations of Ministers may uphold some communion

[1] This letter is given in full, without signatures, *Ratio Disciplinæ*, pp. 178, 179; and with the names in the *Panoplist*, x, 320, 321.

[2] In the manuscript records of the Cambridge-Boston Association.

and correspondence wth one another, and y^{t} y^{r} would freely comunicate unto each other by letters, w^{t}ever y^{r} may apprehend a watchful regard unto y^{e} great interests of Religion among us may call to be considered."

The next step in the movement is obscure, owing to the loss of the records of the Cambridge-Boston Association and the Minister's Convention at this point. When the veil is once more lifted it is nearly a year later, Sept. 13, 1705, when nine delegates, representing the five Associations of Boston, Weymouth, Salem, Sherborne, and Bristol, (as far as known all then existing in Massachusetts) met and drew up the *Proposals* of 1705.[1] Exactly how this committee was appointed is not stated, but that it was no chance coming together is shown by its declaration that it met "according to former agreement." If conjecture may be allowed a place, it seems probable that the resolutions of the Ministers' Convention of 1704, and the commendatory letter by which they were accompanied, awakened a response which seemed to warrant further action. This action may well have taken the form of a vote at the Ministers' Convention of May 1705[2] favoring a further extension of associational powers, and naming a place and time at which representatives of the Associations should come together and draw up the desired scheme. However this may have been, the fact is certain that this committee, on Sept. 13, 1705, prepared a series of *Proposals* in two parts, the first aiming at the establishment of carefully organized local Associations in all sections of Mas-

[1] The date and place and signatures are given in the copy of the Proposals printed in the *Panoplist*, x, 323. In the copy prefixed by John Wise to his *Churches Quarrel Espoused* the names are intentionally suppressed, and the phrase "Delegates of the Associations" reads "Association," implying that the committee represented one association instead of five.

[2] I know little regarding the events of this meeting. The date was May 31; and Sewall speaks of dining with the ministers, in company with the governor and other magistrates, at Mr. Willard's house (5 *Coll. Mass. Hist. Soc.*, vi, 132). But I think we can go a little farther. The "Question" which the "Proposals" answer was clearly not propounded by the Committee that drafted the Proposals. By what body was it so probably submitted to them as by the Ministers' Convention? This origin of the "Question" in the Convention of 1705 seems doubly probable in view of the prompt ratification of the "Proposals" which answered it by the Convention of 1706.

sachusetts, which should give advice to pastors in difficulties and license candidates for the ministry; and a General Association meeting annually: and the second proposing the formation of standing councils, or consociations, composed of the ministers and representatives of the churches in particular districts, the decisions of which should "be looked upon as final and decisive." To these *Proposals* were appended the names of Rev. Messrs. Samuel Willard, Cotton Mather and Ebenezer Pemberton of the Cambridge-Boston Association; Samuel Torrey and John Danforth representing that of Weymouth; Samuel Cheever and Joseph Gerrish that of Salem; Grindal Rawson the Sherborne body; and Samuel Danforth the Bristol Association.

Two forms of the document have been preserved, one by John Wise, bearing the attestation of an Association, doubtless the Cambridge-Boston, dated Nov. 5, 1705,[1] and the other published in the *Panoplist*, from the manuscript left by Cotton Mather, and having the far more important endorsement:

"Further approved and confirmed, and a resolution to pursue with the Divine assistance, in all suitable methods, the intention of the said proposals:—By a General Convention of the Ministers at *Boston*; 30*d.* 3*m.* 1706.[2]

Attested by

SAMUEL WILLARD, *Mod.*"

Such were the supporters of the *Proposals* of 1705. But owing to the fact that some of our best New England historians have forgotten that there was a fuller text than that given by John Wise, or have at least forgotten the signatures and endorsements which he suppressed, the real extent of the movement has not had due recognition. In view of the

[1] Wise declares "where the Place was, or the Persons who were present in this Randezvouze, shall never be told by me, unless it be Extorted by the Rack." *Churches Quarrel*, ed. 1715, p. 115. It is interesting to notice that Nov. 5, 1705, was the first Monday in Nov., a regular meeting day of the Boston Association as shown by their records as far as extant. The Cambridge-Boston Association seems to have been the agent in communicating the *Proposals* to the ministers and associations in 1705, as it was in forwarding the Conventional resolutions in 1704.

[2] *I. e.* May 30, 1706, the regular meeting of the Ministers' Convention. This attestation has been overlooked by the modern historians who have treated of the Proposals.

agency of five Associations in their composition, and the approval of the *Proposals* by the body representative of all the Massachusetts ministers, it is hardly just to affirm with Prof. Tyler that "the document was understood to have been the work of the two Mathers, backed by a coterie of clerical admirers,"[1] nor have Drs. J. S. Clark[2] or H. M. Dexter[3] spoken with their accustomed accuracy in representing the *Proposals* as the device of Cambridge-Boston Association alone. So far from being the work of a faction, it would be hard to show what elements of then existent Boston Congregationalism were unrepresented in their production.

Parallel to this movement in Massachusetts ran a similar effort in Connecticut. That colony had probably no such innovators as the Brattles and their friends, but its churches were in about as unsettled a state as those of Massachusetts.[4] The great interest of the colony during the opening years of the eighteenth century was the foundation of Yale College, and the men who founded it were affiliated in some degree with the conservatives of eastern Massachusetts. The connection between the establishment of Yale and the party about Boston who were opposed to the liberalizing of Harvard has been pressed too far by President Quincy. Yale had its birth independently of Boston ecclesiastical quarrels.[5] But while thus moved by Connecticut rather than

[1] *Hist. of American Literature*, ii, 106. Prof. Tyler falls into the further error of saying that it was issued without any signature attached.

[2] *Sketch of the Cong. Churches in Mass.*, p. 115.

[3] *Congregationalism, as seen in its Literature*, 491–494. Dr. Dexter's treatment of the whole matter is unsatisfactory, and chronologically reversed, in that he discusses the Saybrook Platform before the Proposals. References a few pages on show that he was acquainted with the *Panoplist* text, but he could not have had it in mind while writing this passage; nor does he seem to have noticed the signatures or the approval by Convention.

[4] Compare Trumbull, *Connecticut*, i, 480; and the vote of the General Court calling the Saybrook Synod, *Conn. Records*, v, 51.

[5] See Quincy, *Hist. of Harvard*, i, 197–200; Kingsley's review of Quincy, *Biblical Repository*, July, Oct. 1841, Jan. 1842; Woolsey, *Hist. Discourse . . . before . . . Yale College . . . 150 years after the Founding;* F. B. Dexter, *Papers of New Haven Hist. Soc.*, iii, 1–31; S. E. Baldwin, *Ibid.*, 405–410. Yet Mr. J. A. Doyle, in his *Puritan Colonies*, ii, 491, still takes Quincy as his guide. The chapter is by no means his best.

Massachusetts interests, the men who founded Yale College in 1701 were in sympathy with the conservative party in Boston. Evidence of this cordiality of feeling is ample. The earliest document in the archives of Yale is a beautifully written "Scheme for a College," endorsed in Cotton Mather's handwriting,[1] and though its proposals were not adopted, it manifests that active interest which Cotton Mather always felt in the institution for which he secured, in 1718, the benefactions and the name of Yale. Nor was this interest one-sided. On Aug. 7, 1701, "the first fixed date"[2] in the history of Yale College, the ministers most concerned in its foundation, Israel Chauncy, Thomas Buckingham, Abraham Pierson, James Pierpont, and Gurdon Saltonstall, wrote to Isaac Addington, Secretary of the Massachusetts colony and to his friend Judge Sewall, both men of strong conservative sympathies, asking the draft of a charter for the proposed college. To this request Addington and Sewall heartily responded, and though the draft was seriously modified by its recipients, the letters, and others sent by Increase Mather, show the degree of cordiality and ready communiction existing between the leading Connecticut ministers and the conservative party about Boston.[3] Anything done at Boston would soon be known in Connecticut.

Yale College having been founded, its trustee meetings became the most representative ecclesiastical gatherings in the colony, and soon discussed other matters than college business. As a result, at their meeting at Guilford in March 1703, they sent forth a circular letter to sound the ministers as to the desirability of a united confession of faith. In this epistle they besought their ministerial brethren to :—[4]

[1] Compare, F. B. Dexter, *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 5. The letter is lost.

[3] For these letters and the draft of the charter see Woolsey, *Discourse*, pp. 86, 87, 91–94.

[4] From the manuscript in the possession of Yale University, Clap, *Annals . . . of Yale*, p. 12, represented this as a proposition for a general Synod of all Connecticut churches, and Trumbull, *Connecticut*, i, 478, copied him. Such an interpretation is an unwarranted inference from the paper. Compare F. B. Dexter, *Biog. Sketches of the Grad. of Yale Col.*, p. 12.

"Peruse y^e^ assemblies Confession of Faith, as also y^t^ made by y^e^ Synod held at Boston *may 12. 1680* & manifest in convenient season y^r^ concurrence w^th^ us in addressing our Religious Government, as soon as we may be prepared, y^t^ they would please to recommend to our people & y^r^ posterity . . . . . y^e^ Confession made by y^e^ Synod in Boston May 12. 1680. . . . . we request you^d^ signifye y^r^ minds to y^e^ Rev^d^. M^r^. Buckingham in Say-Brook, M^r^. Woodbridge in Hartford, M^r^. Davenport in Stratford, & m^r^ Andrew or Pierpont in Milford or N-Haven, y^t^ so from you we may understand how far y^r^ is a generall concurrence in y^e^ p'mises."

What reponse this appeal elicited cannot be affirmed with definiteness; but it shows the drift of thought among the leading ministers of Connecticut. It is not, however, till five years later that their movements again became plain. Meanwhile the attempts of the ecclesiastical leaders in Massachusetts to establish standing councils had borne fruit in 1705 and 1706, and were not unfamiliar to their friends in Connecticut.[1] The thought of the Connecticut ministers turned toward something more than the approval of a confession of faith, they would now couple with it the establishment of a system of stricter government like that attempted in Massachusetts. And now, in Dec., 1707, an event well-nigh without a parallel in American history occurred,—a leading minister of the colony, Gurdon Saltonstall of New London, was called directly from the pulpit to the Governor's chair. Saltonstall had experienced in his own pastorate the evils of a church quarrel,[2] he was a graduate of Harvard and a friend of the Massachusetts conservatives;[3] and on his election to the governorship the movement for stricter church order went rapidly forward.[4] At

[1] No further proof is needed than that the Saybrook Articles are taken to some extent verbally from the *Proposals* of 1705.

[2] Caulkins, *Hist. of New London*, p. 377.

[3] Saltonstall was from Haverhill, Mass., and graduated at Harvard in 1684. He was one of the ministers who requested Addington and Sewall for the draft of a charter for Yale in 1701.

[4] Stiles was doubtless correct in the statement that the favorable action of the Connecticut legislature on the Saybrook proposition was brought about "very much through the influences of the honorable Gurdon Saltonstall," *Discourse on the Christian Union*, Boston, 1761, p. 69.

the first meeting of the General Court subsequent to his election, May, 1708, a bill was introduced into and passed the upper House, of which the governor was than a member, ordering the churches of each county to assemble by pastors and delegates at their county towns on June 28, 1708, to prepare rules for ecclesiastical discipline, and to elect representatives to a Synod which should meet at the next Commencement at Saybrook, in September, and draw up a platform of government for the whole colony. Apparently the bill met with opposition from the representatives of the towns in the lower House, but after some conference it passed that body also,[1] and became a law. In accordance with its provisions the Saybrook Synod met Sept. 9, 1708, with an attendance of four laymen and twelve ministers, eight of the latter being trustees of Yale College, and adopted the Confession of 1680, recommended by the trustees in 1703, and the *Heads of Agreement* prepared largely through the agency of Increase Mather as a bond of union between Presbyterians and Congregationalists about London in 1691 and lauded by the Mathers as the best exposition of New England Congregationalism. Its most important work was of course the fifteen *Articles*, the "Saybrook Platform," which embody the features, and to some extent the language, of the *Proposals* of 1705, though in a considerably more carefully wrought out plan. This three-fold result was approved by the General Court at its session the following October, and established as the legal religious system of Connecticut, though with allowance of toleration to dissenters.

But although unanimously agreed upon by the Synod at Saybrook and heartily approved by the General Court, there was diversity of opinion enough in regard to the merits of the system to have wrecked any attempt at its establishment dependent on voluntary agreement rather than legislative support. Differing views as to the nature of the government thus created existed in the Synod itself;[2] while

[1] See Bacon's *Discourse* in *Cont. Eccles. Hist. Conn.*, pp. 32, 33.

[2] Rev. Noah Hobert of Fairfield, a strong supporter of Saybrook high churchism, declared "a man must be a perfect Stranger to the Principles and Temper of that Time, who is capable of supposing that either of these Parts of

in the county meetings, which were convened to put the orders of the Court into practice, a yet greater divergence appeared. While the churches of Fairfield county were not satisfied with its strictness and added a stringent interpretation of their own,[1] those of New Haven county found it far too strenuous and put on record a markedly minimizing explanation of its rules.[2] New London county appears never to have been enthusiastic in regard to the Platform; and the reading of the legislative vote of approval in the church at Norwich of which John Woodward, a scribe of the Saybrook Synod was pastor, is affirmed to have been the cause of a quarrel which nearly rent the church and led it ultimately to renounce the Saybrook system.[3] At East Windsor the church and pastor took opposite views and the result was a dispute which distressed the declining years of Timothy Edwards.[4]

Why then did a system of church government generally favored by the ministry of both colonies, but meeting with opposition in both, become established in Connecticut, while its most essential feature, the consociation of churches failed in Massachusetts? Cotton Mather, writing between 1719 and 1726, gives as the explanation:[5]—

"Such *Proposals* as these found in one of the *New-English* Colonies a more general Reception (and even a Countenance from the Civil Government) than in the Rest. In the other, there were some very considerable Persons among the *Ministers*, as well as of the *Brethren*, who thought the *Liberties* of *particular Churches* to be in danger of being too much *limited* and *infringed* in them. And in Deference to these Good Men, the *Proposals*

our Constitution [the Heads of Agreement and Articles] taken singly or without its Connection with the other, would have been unanimously agreed upon and consented to by that body of Men, "*An Attempt to Illustrate . . . the Ecclesiastical Constitution of . . . Connecticut*, New Haven, 1765, p. 8. See also Trumbull, *Connecticut*, i, 487.

[1] In full in Orcutt, *Hist. of the Old Town of Stratford and the City of Bridgeport*, i, 312, 313.

[2] In full in J. Todd, *Faithful Narrative of the Proceedings of the First Society and Church in Wallingford*, New Haven, 1759, pp. 33–37.

[3] Caulkins, *Hist. of Norwich*, pp. 284–287.

[4] Stiles, *Ancient Windsor*, pp. 240–246.

[5] *Ratio Disciplinæ*, pp. 184, 185.

were never prosecuted, beyond the Bounds of *meer Proposals* * * * * There was indeed a Satyr, Printed against these *written Proposals*, and against the Servants of GOD that made them. Nevertheless, those *Followers of the Lamb*, remembring the Maxim of, *Not Answering*, used the Conduct which the University of *Helmstadt* lately prescribed under some Abuses put upon them; *Visum est non alio Remedio quam generoso Silentio et pio Contemptu, utendum nobis esse.*"

Mather's reference is of course to the brilliant attack on these *Proposals* put forth in 1710 by Rev. John Wise, of what was then Chebacco parish in Ipswich, Mass., under the title of *The Churches Quarrel Espoused*, and which Wise followed in 1717 by a powerful exposition of what he believed to be the system set forth in the Cambridge Platform, *The Vindication of the Government of New England Churches*. The cogency of these tracts has been justly praised. They are certainly the ablest exposition of the democratic principles which modern Congregationalism has come to claim as its own that the eighteenth century produced. Yet without abating the respect due to Wise for his work, or minimizing the influence which his books exercised on political thought when republished on the eve of the revolutionary war, it may be questioned whether their effect in bringing to naught the *Proposals* in Massachusetts has not been rated higher than it should.[1] Wise's satire was not published till four years after the ratification of the *Proposals* by the Ministers' Convention, and not till two years after Connecticut had inaugurated a similar system. Some influence other than the *Churches Quarrel Espoused* must have hindered, or the scheme would have come into practice before that tract was given to the world. Mather indicates other reasons. The *Proposals* in Massachusetts were opposed by "some very considerable persons;" there was opposition also in Connecticut, if not in the same degree, enough to have made a voluntary union unattainable. But in Connecticut the movement had "Countenance from the Civil Government"; in Massa-

[1] E. g., Clark, *Hist. Sketch Cong. Chs. in Mass.*, pp. 115–121; Tyler, *Hist. American Literature*, ii, 104–116; Dexter, *Cong. as seen in its Literature*, pp. 494–502.

chusetts it had none. Here then was the greatest point of difference. Nothing could have been more diverse than the legislative situation in the two colonies. Probably the General Court of Connecticut was never in a state more favorable to the enactment of an ecclesiastical constitution than in 1708. It was still under its semi-independent charter, able to choose its own upper House and governor. That governor was a minister, warmly attached to the church system of the colony, popular alike with his ministerial associates and with the legislature,[1] and a believer in the desirability of a stricter organization of the churches. The Connecticut Court had long been accustomed to interfere in the affairs of the churches, such interference was not unpopular with as representative men as the trustees of Yale,[2] and would meet with even less resistance under a respected ministerial governor.

The situation of the Massachusetts General Court was far different. That body had received an entirely new constitution in 1692, and one that practically ended the old-time clerical influence. The lower House was still chosen by the people, but the upper House, though nominated by the General Court, was subject to the veto power of the governor, a veto freely exercised;[3] and the governor was of royal appointment, with authority to reject all bills distasteful to him. The governor at this time was the notorious Joseph Dudley, no friend to the Congregational Churches of Massachusetts, whose position may be judged by a letter to the Lords of Trade in England, in July, 1704, in which he complains that the Court used its right of nomination to the upper House "to affront every loyal and good man that loves the Church of England and dependence on her

[1] No clearer demonstration of the estimate in which Saltonstall was held by the legislature of Connecticut need be sought than the fact that in order to elect him in 1707 that body repealed a law requiring the governor to be chosen from candidates nominated for assistants.

[2] Compare the paper of 1703, *ante*, p. 81, in which the trustees propose to ask the Court to establish a confession of faith.

[3] In 1703 Dudley rejected 5 nominations, in 1704, 2, and in 1706, 2. Palfrey, iv, 253, 254, 291, 299.

Majesty's government";[1] and who, while not wholly cutting loose from the Roxbury Congregational Church of which he was a member, worshipped much in the Boston Episcopal chapel, and signed a petition to the Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1703, in which he and his associates are styled "the members of the Church at Boston."[2] The upper House, too, which so readily passed the Saybrook bill in Connecticut, was not likely to be so compliant with the wishes of the ministers in Massachusetts. Its membership was largely from Boston and the immediate vicinity, and there was already growing up in the commercial and governmental center of New England a class more influenced by trade and crown appointments than desire to maintain the discipline of the churches of the colony or the old spirit of political independence. The *Proposals* of 1705 could not, in any reasonable probability, have passed the Massachusetts legislature, and failing of legislative support there was enough opposition in either colony to prevent their establishment. That the ecclesiastical development of Massachusetts and Connecticut in the last century ran in divergent paths was due, in no small degree, to the differing nature of their respective governors and General Courts.

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[1] *Ibid.*, 292.

[2] *Ibid.*, 297, 298.

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